

Your Mind-Body Wellness

Living Your Best with a Chronic Condition

Living with a chronic illness is a daily challenge. When you have a chronic medical condition (long-term or lifelong), the activities of daily living can become more complex. The complications of your illness overlay all the other challenges in life. They can easily affect your mental health and your quality of life. And they are there every day.

Millions of people have to deal with complex medical conditions over a long term. This can include cancer, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, arthritis, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis and many other such conditions. Whether your illness is long-standing or newly diagnosed, there are many things you can do to improve your quality of life.

While each condition has its own specific course of ongoing treatment, there are helpful life management skills that anyone with a chronic condition can adopt.

Living with Chronic Illness

A chronic medical condition may seem like it has taken control of your life. But there are steps you can take to improve your well-being.

On the physical health side:

- Keep regular appointments and maintain good communication with your doctor(s).
- Take your medications exactly as prescribed.
- Do any testing (such as labs, imaging) that your doctor recommends. Discuss the results with him or her.
- Report changes in your condition to your doctor.
- Build a program of exercise that you enjoy into your daily schedule.

On the mental health side:

- Don't let the illness define you. Continue to pursue personal goals. Take part in whatever activities you can that have meaning for you.
- Remember that you will have many ups and downs in dealing with your condition. Don't be hard on yourself when you have setbacks.
- Remember to laugh. Humor can be great for mental health.
- See a doctor or counselor if you think you might be depressed. Treatment works!

Log on to to access more helpful information and learn how to:

- Improve your ability to manage life with your chronic medical condition.
- Confront and deal with depression that can accompany chronic illness.
- Access resources that can help you meet your challenges.

Having a positive attitude is a step in the right direction. It can have a positive impact on how you look at life, how you see things around you and how you handle the situations you are

faced with. Although you can't always control what happens to you, you can control your attitude toward life events.

Go online today! Call 1-800-222-0364 or 1-888-262-7848 (TTY users) for confidential support. Or, log on to www.FOH4YOU.com and access *Living Your Best with a Chronic Condition* and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section. Share this with your co-workers and family members.